

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 2 APRIL 2015 AT 10.00 AM

Present

Councillor (Chair)

Councillors:

HJ David
M Gregory
MEJ Nott OBE
CE Smith

Officers:

Sarah Kingsbury Head of Human Resources, Organisation and Development and
Customer Services

Paul Williams

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor C L Jones – Holiday
Councillor L C Morgan – Hospital Appointment
Councillor C Reeves – Work Commitment
Councillor D Sage – In hospital
Councillor P J White – Unwell.

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

98. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Equalities of 5 February 2015 were as a true and accurate record subject to the Leader's decoration being amended to an OBE in the list of Members present.

99. ISSUES FACING DISABLED PEOPLE IN BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

The Committee were addressed by representatives of the Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People in order to discuss issues faced by disabled people. The Coalition discussed direct payments; wheelchair accessible taxis and the development of a dedicated bus shuttle service between Bridgend railway station and bus station.

The Coalition expressed concern at the lack of availability of wheelchair accessible taxis at all times of the day which did not promote independence for wheelchair users. A member of the coalition commented that some taxis had put seats back in and were unable to accommodate wheelchairs. A member of the Committee commented that taxis were subject to inspection twice a year in addition to spot checks being carried out by enforcement officers. The Cabinet would take up the issue of the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis with the Licensing Section.

The Coalition requested that a dedicated bus shuttle service between the railway station and bus station be put in place due to the distances between both bus and railway stations with the railway station situated at the top of a hill, which often necessitated a taxi journey having to be taken to get to the railway station. The Coalition also stated that a combined bus and train ticket could be purchased however there was no bus stop outside the railway station and passengers were faced with taking a taxi to connect with the bus station. The Committee commented on the need to address linkages between the bus and railway stations and that there is a plan for an integrated hub between both stations which has been postponed due to the rail electrification plans, but would be progressed as a matter of urgency between the Council and Network Rail. The Cabinet would also take up the lack of timetabling of a regular bus service between the bus and railway stations with the Highways and Transportation Department. A member of the Coalition questioned whether OTED would be interested in providing a link between the bus and railway stations. A member of the Committee commented that OTED could not pick up from regular stops. A member of the Committee also commented that he had recently met with representatives of Network Rail who had advised that some local authorities work up bids for projects such as integrated hubs for when funding becomes available. A member of the Committee commented whether existing bus services could be re-routed to go up Station Hill to pick up passengers. A member of the coalition stated that this issue had been raised with the bus operators previously however some buses would have difficulty in negotiating the turn at the top of the hill.

A member of the Committee asked whether the coalition had checked out the suitability in relation to the provision of dropped kerbs of the route of the re-located Shopmobility facility to the Town Centre. A member of the coalition commented that the re-location of Shopmobility had met with a mixed response and that there were some shops on Nolton Street which were not wheelchair accessible however shops in Queen Street were more accessible for wheelchair users. The coalition confirmed they were consulted on the proposals for the re-location of Shopmobility.

A member of the coalition expressed concern at the lack of a bus shelter at the bus stop outside the Bridgend Life Centre. The Cabinet undertook to raise the lack of a bus shelter at the bus stop outside the Bridgend Life Centre with the Highways and Transportation Department and that a cantilever option in order to accommodate wheelchairs be looked at. The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that the Access Forum meets regularly with the Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People. He also informed the Committee that Equality Impact Assessments were carried out on schemes which should involve consultation all access groups. The Cabinet undertook to ensure that consultation is carried out with access groups on highways and transportation schemes. The Diversity Champion informed the Committee that it was hoped a member of the Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People would be a mentee as part of the Diversity in Democracy project. The Committee considered the impact of the proposed development of some 500 new properties at Waterton would have on accessibility and on the infrastructure of Bridgend which was very reliant on cars. The Committee also considered that it would be useful for dialogue to be had with the Access Forum when major projects are being planned. The Committee considered that accessibility issues at the Civic Offices be looked at meaningfully.

A member of the Coalition raised an issue of direct payments would be taken up with the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing.

The Committee thanked the members of the Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

100. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Equality and Engagement Officer reported on the Committee's proposed forward work programme for the forthcoming year, which were based on the key areas of the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme; suggestions made by the Committee during the past year; changes to the national equalities agenda and on half yearly reporting arrangements for the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme / Standards. He stated that it was intended that the Committee meet 3 times per year.

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that notice had been issued to VALREC terminating the Council's Service Level Agreement with that group.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the Forward Work Programme.

101. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Equality and Engagement Officer reported on an update on equality and diversity learning and development for the Council's employees. He stated that the requirement for training was outlined in the Public Sector Equality Duty and Welsh Language Scheme, with a need for managers and staff to have an awareness and understanding of equality and diversity when preparing Equality Impact Assessments and delivery and when delivering frontline services. Welsh language training and awareness is based on identified business need for frontline services.

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme outline a commitment to implement, evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of equality, diversity and Welsh language training. He informed the Committee that whilst the Welsh language was not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, Welsh language learning for appropriate employees must be considered by the Council. He stated that a 3 year learning and development plan had been approved by the Committee in October 2014 is in place which outlined the levels and types of training to be provided, together with targeted numbers of staff.

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee of a summary of feedback of the equality and diversity training undertaken between November 2014 and February 2015 and following the pilot phase the programme would be delivered to other services within the Council.

He also informed the Committee of the steep increase in the number of consultations being undertaken across the Council by service areas and the Marketing and Engagement Team and an integral element of this process is to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. He stated that an EIA training pilot programme would be developed within the Resources Directorate and introduced across all other service areas from April 2015.

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that elected Members had previously received equality and diversity training and it was proposed that a further programme of training is delivered. The Committee considered the importance of equality and diversity training being delivered to Members and attendance at this training should be compulsory, however in order to encourage greater attendance it may be beneficial to hold the training as a pre-Council briefing.

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that the new Welsh Language Standards due to be introduced in 2015 highlight the requirement for the Council's customers to undertake their business in the language of their choice. He stated that whilst there was no requirement for all frontline staff employees to be fluent in the Welsh language, customers and visitors can expect an initial meet and greet and some basic business to be conducted through the medium of Welsh. To this end, the Council is working with the University of South Wales to develop a programme of Business Welsh to be delivered to all employees whose roles require a public interface. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development informed the Committee that she would ensure the use of the Welsh language is publicised in the Customer Contact Centre. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development also stated that CMB had been briefed on the Welsh Language Standards and that a copy of this briefing be sent to the Committee.

The Committee considered that some confusion can arise with bilingual street signs. The Cabinet Communities commented that the Council is working with the Welsh Language Board on bilingual signs for all streets in order to assist the emergency services.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

102. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 11.16 am